

or do nothing. To ask the question is to answer it. Of course, we tried. Our Nation is in crisis. We have a health care crisis. It is a formidable task. It is exceedingly complex and difficult. But we have an obligation to try, at least try, to fix it.

If we try, then that poses a second question. If we try, we ask the question: Do we try our best or not? The answer is obvious: We try our best.

This legislation is a combination of a year or two of work by folks in the medical profession, of health care economists—Americans who are trying to find ways to get control of costs and improve quality. There are not a lot of new ideas here. They are ideas that have been percolating around for the last year or two. Some are in Massachusetts, some in other States. Some of it is going into integrated systems, such as Geisinger and Intermountain. The idea of bundling is already practiced by other institutions. There is not a lot that is terribly new.

We are pulling together, we are helping establish a policy in our country that comes up with a plan, a system in America that allows doctors and patients to have total free choice. They choose. We are helping doctors with the best evidence, the best information so they can focus on the patient care even more than they are now. We are cutting down the budget deficits. That is very important. And we are also helping Medicare by extending the solvency of Medicare another 5 years. These are things we pulled together and have to do.

I very much hope we can move on and get this legislation passed and work with the House and the President signs a bill that we can start finally putting together something of which we will be very proud. Our country does not have a health care system today. It is a free-for-all. It is a free-for-all for all kinds of groups. This is the first effort to get something together that works, giving doctors and hospitals and patients the choice they want to have and they should have. We are also bringing costs down and improving quality of health care.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I appreciate the statement of the chairman of the Finance Committee. It is one of the most well-reasoned statements we have had. And rightfully so. No one worked harder on this matter than Senator BAUCUS. I appreciate his dedication, hard work, and the way he handles that Finance Committee.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time until 2:15 p.m. tomorrow, Wednesday, December 2, be for debate with respect to the pending Mikulski amendment and the McCain motion to commit; that during this period, Senator REID or his designee be recognized to offer an amendment as a side-by-side to the McCain motion, and Senator MURKOWSKI or her designee be recognized to offer an amendment as a

side-by-side to the Mikulski amendment; that the debate time be divided equally among the four principals listed above; that no other amendments or motions to commit be in order during the pendency of these amendments and motion; that at 2:15 p.m. tomorrow, the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the above noted in the following order; that prior to each vote there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided and controlled in the usual form, and after the first vote, the remaining votes in the sequence be 10 minutes in duration; further, that all amendments and motion provided under this consent require an affirmative 60-vote threshold for adoption, and that if those included in the agreement do not achieve that threshold, then the amendments and motion be withdrawn:

Mikulski amendment No. 2791; Murkowski amendment regarding preventive care; Reid or designee amendment regarding Medicare; McCain motion to commit regarding Medicare.

Mr. President, before I put this to a final consent request, let me say, we have been trying to get some votes today. It would be very good if we could move this bill along, have some votes tomorrow afternoon. We would have four votes. We have two amendments pending. This, in fact, would dispose of those amendments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and I will have to object, I wish to say to my good friend, the majority leader, I thought over the last couple of hours we would be able to get consent to have votes on the Mikulski and Murkowski amendments. But I had indicated to him, and I want to say publicly, that we have a number of speakers interested in speaking on the Medicare issue and the McCain motion. So I will not be able to lock in the McCain motion or the side-by-side that I gather under this consent request my good friend, the majority leader, may offer.

I would still like to be able to get the two votes earlier referred to—the Mikulski and Murkowski amendments—but regrettably I cannot even lock those in right now. But I want to do that as soon as possible so at least we can get those two votes at some point reasonably early in the day and turn back to debate on the McCain motion.

I might say, we want to vote on the McCain motion. We certainly have no desire to delay that vote. But we do have a number of people who want to speak to it. With that understanding and with the point I want to make to my good friend that I want to get the two amendments by MIKULSKI and MURKOWSKI locked in as soon as possible, I must object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of Colorado). Objection is heard. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I wish to share a few thoughts as we go forward on the health care debate and re-

mind our colleagues what we have been hearing at the town meetings that most of us have been having around the country and what people are concerned about.

Part of it is they think we don't have a very good perspective on what is going on in America. They are not happy with us. They think we are losing our fiscal minds, that we are ignoring the fact that we are facing a soaring debt. We passed on top of the debt we already had an \$800 billion stimulus package—\$800 billion—the largest spending bill in the history of America on top of all our other baseline bills.

Our baseline appropriations bills, not even including the additions by the stimulus, are showing double-digit increases. These increases are far more than President Bush ever had, and he was criticized for reckless spending. He never had the kind of baseline spending increases that were passed a few months ago, a few weeks ago in some cases.

This year, as of September 30, we acknowledged and accounted for a \$1.4 trillion budget deficit in 1 year—1 year, \$1.4 trillion, September 30. The Republicans never had a deficit so large in 1 year. And in the next year, it is projected to be over \$1 trillion, and continue to average \$1 trillion each year over the next 10 years. In the 8th, 9th, and 10th years of the President's 10-year budget, the deficit goes up. It does not ever go down, it continues to go up. Therefore, we end up with a huge debt. That is according to our own Congressional Budget Office hired by the Congress—approved by the majority of our colleagues who are, of course, Democrats. They approve the Budget Director, and he tries to do a pretty good job of giving us honest numbers.

This is what the numbers show. In 2008, we had \$5.8 trillion in debt in America since the founding of the Republic. By 2013, 5 years down the road, that will double to \$11.8 trillion. And in 10 years, the 10-year budget the President submitted to us—I did not submit this budget, President Obama submitted it and it was passed by the Congress—increases that debt to \$17.3 trillion, tripling the debt of America in 10 years. That is what the people are very concerned about, among other things.

What does all this pending mean also? It means government power, government reach, government domination, government takeover. People are concerned about it. They are asking: Are you not getting the message? What is the matter with you? That is what I am hearing. I think people have a right to be concerned.

One of the issues I have raised is the fact that the interest on the debt in 2009 was \$170 billion for 1 year—that is for interest alone. By 2019, interest on the debt, according to CBO, in 1 year, will be \$799 billion. That number is higher than the budget for defense. It is larger than any other program. We